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STATE FOR WHA/EX AND WHA/CAR  
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SUBJECT: HAITI ELECTIONS: ROLES OF THE NEWLY ELECTED

REF: PORT AU PRINCE 900

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11. (U) Summary: The December 3 election moves Haiti closer to the decentralized governmental structure outlined in the 1987 constitution. Haitians will vote for candidates for the communal section administrative councils (CASECs), communal section assemblies (ASECs), municipal councils and town delegations. Three senate seats and 11 seats in the chamber of deputies are also up for election. These elected bodies will later go on to select and send representatives to several non-elected councils and assemblies at higher levels of government. With the local and municipal positions filled, Haiti should be better equipped to provide services to its citizens. Increased government presence on a local level could theoretically bring much-needed services to more citizens and increase Haitians' feelings of inclusion in the democratic process. However, budget shortfalls, lack of training and the absence of a clear mandate will continue to hamstring the newly-filled offices. End Summary.

12. (U) The Haitian constitution of 1987 partitions the country into three territorial divisions. From smallest to largest, the divisions are: communal sections, of which there are 568; municipalities (sometimes referred to as communes), of which there are 140; and departments, of which there are ten. All three territorial divisions have executive councils and legislative assemblies. Lavalas partisans made up the majority of officials elected to communal section and municipal offices in 2000. The opposition ran most of the Lavalasian officials out of office following the ouster of Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 2004, and the IGoH appointed replacements. Candidates for these positions are only required to receive a relative majority in order to be elected; therefore, there need only be one round of these elections.

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Communal Section: ASEC and CASEC  
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13. (U) Haiti is divided into 568 communal sections. Each has its own "communal section administrative council" (CASEC), which consists of three members who run together on a single party slate. CASEC members serve five-year terms and operate

like local executive branches, overseeing rural areas that do not have a city government. Responsibilities of the CASECs include management of public resources and execution of laws at the communal section level.

¶4. (U) Each communal section also has a "communal section assembly" (ASEC), ranging from seven to 25 members and elected from party slates. ASECs are on the same five-year election cycle as the CASECs and serve as the legislative body for rural areas. Additional responsibilities of the ASECs include: overseeing the work of the corresponding CASEC; nominating Justices of the Peace; and selecting one representative to serve on the municipal assembly.

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Municipalities: Municipal Council and Town Delegation  
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¶5. (U) Haiti's 140 municipalities each have two types of elected positions. The first are the 3-member "municipal councils", of which the mayor is the principal official. As with CASECs, three candidates run as a party slate, with one being designated as President of the council and serving as mayor. Municipal councils serve five-year terms. Responsibilities of the municipal councils include: (1) management of state resources in the municipality (financial resources, property, buildings, public health centers, markets, roads, forests, municipal employees); (2) execution of laws, decrees and other measures that concern the municipality; (3) proposing a budget; (4) management of revenue and expenditures, including collection of certain tax revenue; and (5) ensuring the maintenance of public health.

¶6. (U) Each municipality also has a "town delegation" made up of delegates elected from towns in the region. Town delegations make up part of the municipal assemblies and are

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responsible for overseeing the work of the municipal council, including approving the council's budget, and selecting members to serve on the departmental councils.

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Additional Races: Senate and Chamber of Deputies  
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¶7. (U) The December 3 election will also decide the fate of the three outstanding senate seats and 11 chamber of deputies contests that remained undecided following the April 21 parliamentary elections (ref A).

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Non-Elected Institutions to be Established Post Elections  
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¶8. (U) The formation of several other non-elected bodies hinges on the successful completion of these elections. Each of the 140 municipalities will have a "municipal assembly" comprised of all of the town delegations in the municipality as well as one representative selected by each of the ASECs. The municipal assemblies also select one member each to serve on the departmental assemblies.

¶9. (U) There are no elected positions at the departmental level, but the following non-elected institutions are required by Haiti's constitution, although they have yet to be established. Each of Haiti's 10 departments has one "departmental assembly", comprised of one member selected from each municipal assembly. In addition to being the legislative body at the department level, departmental assemblies elect and oversee the work of the departmental council, select a member to serve on the interdepartmental council, nominate certain judges and nominate candidates for the Permanent Electoral Council (see paragraph 12).

¶10. (U) The "departmental council" draws up the government's

development plan in cooperation with the central government. The council is charged to manage its financial resources for the exclusive benefit of the department and renders its accounts to the departmental assembly.

¶11. (U) The "interdepartmental council", in concert with the Executive, studies and plans projects for decentralization and development of the country from the social, economic, commercial, agricultural and industrial standpoint. The interdepartmental council members have voting rights in the Council of Ministers on issues of development and decentralization.

¶12. (U) The final nine members of the Permanent Electoral Council are chosen from among the nominees by all three branches of national government. Because the departmental assemblies and councils have never been established, a Permanent Electoral Council has never been formed. All elections to date have been overseen by a Provisional Electoral Council.

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Significant Changes  
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¶13. (U) The December 3 elections pave the way for a return to norms outlined in the Haitian constitution. The drafters of the 1987 constitution envisioned the decentralization of government as one of the pillars of the new Haiti. The departmental and interdepartmental councils have large roles in planning this decentralization, and the lower level assemblies and councils are the mechanisms through which the country will execute these plans. Rooted in Haitians' scorn for the Duvalier dictatorships, this multi-branch system of government has built-in checks and balances at every level. Ideally, this will reduce the corruption common among Haitian government officials. Additionally, the new officials will be tasked with nominating judges for positions that have long gone unfilled, and the formation of the Permanent Electoral Council should lead to more regular elections.

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Unresolved and Chronic Problems  
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¶14. (U) Haitian government at the local and regional level has for a long time been confronted with a lack of financial, technical and human resources. Locally elected officials and municipal employees rarely have a clear idea of their prerogatives, don't receive adequate training and aren't fully aware of the means of operation at their disposal. This general lack of resources, organization and basic information impedes the local governments from assuming the administrative, technical and financial autonomy granted to them under the constitution of 1987.

¶15. (U) The local and municipal elections on December 3 will result in about 10,000 elected officials, all of whom would expect a government supported salary as well as associated benefits. The GoH is already unable to pay salaries of currently employed civil servants and will not be able to pay all of the newly elected officials. As has been the case with recently elected members of parliament, the lack of pay will probably distract local and municipal officials from their duties and lessen their effectiveness.

SANDERSON